HANDOUT: ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

CONCEPT DEFINITION	True service-learning happens when service is integrated into the classroom curriculum and aligned with Indiana Academic Standards. Service-learning programs enhance learning through real life, experiential activities. Academics come alive and knowledge is applied through: interaction, research, critical thinking, literature, problem solving, discussion and planning for action.
KEY ASPECTS	Curriculum should be key in guiding the decisions made in determining, organizing, and developing a service-learning project. Curriculum needs should be determined during the needs assessment process and should be critical in confirming that the project/program under consideration will be initiated.
STRENGTHS AS A DIFFERENTIATION PRACTICE	Students each provide service-learning projects/programs with unique experiences and skills. To ensure the strength of the experience and learning environment, each student should first complete a multiple intelligences questionnaire to determine their strengths and challenges in learning. Then, skills should be further developed and challenges should be improved upon through structured experiences that can benefit the student, the community, and curriculum.
ISSUES	Because No Child Left Behind and other school improvement mandates dictate powerful learning experiences, service-learning activities always should be linked with school needs. If state academic curricula are linked strongly with an annually mandated standardized exam, programming can be initiated with those needs in mind.
IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING	It is crucial that educators understand the intellectual strengths and weaknesses of students. Traditionally, school has been focused on the verbal/linguistic and mathematical learners. Even though the theory of multiple intelligences is relatively new to the educational world, it has attempted to change the focus to a differentiated practice. Such intelligences as interpersonal and intrapersonal are first finding the way into classroom instruction. In order for teachers to incorporate differentiated practices that allow students to showcase individual intelligences, one must first have a solid grasp on the eight recognized intelligences. Each of the intelligences involves different ways of thinking and knowing. An educator must be aware of the way in which children see and comprehend information in order to make it valuable. Some examples are presented below. Verbal-linguistic learners could present findings or assist by discussing training needs with community partners. Logical-mathematical students could gather statistics to support training or help guide a project. Visual-spatial learners can develop presentation materials and help establish "the big picture" of the project. Bodily-kinesthetic learners can coordinate physical activities related to the project. Musical learners can ensure that visual presentations materials are prepared with appropriate aural material. Interpersonal learners can help to ensure strong linkages between the groups involved in the service-learning project and S.L.A.B.. Intrapersonal learners should ensure that a consistent pattern of organization guides the project. Naturalist learners can confirm that the physical environment is maintained at all times in developing and performing a project/program.
OTHER CRITICAL ASPECTS	Curriculum developers and directors should be active in these linkages. Teachers also should ensure that steps of programming are clearly linked with academic standards for their subjects and grade levels. Finally, as all school improvement planning encourages students to be active in their learning processes, S.L.A.B.s should be used to ensure that their students are aware of "why they are learning what they are learning."

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SELF-EVALUATION

The following evaluation should be completed by Service-Learning Advisory Boards, teachers, service-learning coordinators, community partners, and especially youth to determine that curriculum and academic needs of students drive every step of the service-learning experience. Service-learning should be at an advocacy level and will be transformative and powerful.

COMPLETED BY: _____   DATE: _____

	DONE	IN PROGRESS	NEED TO DO	DON'T KNOW
1. S.L.A.B. members spend time early in the project/program to verify the curriculum is key in determining and initiating a project/program.				
2. The needs assessment process confirms that the project/program has the potential to transform a curriculum and make it stronger than that which would occur without service-learning.				
3. Curriculum developers and teachers are used early in the project to review what the curricular needs of students are.				
4. Students are an active part in the determination of whether or not the service experience will make the curriculum stronger.				
5. S.L.A.B. members can clearly identify how service-learning will assist students in ensuring that students have a transforming and powerful experience.				
6. The service emphasizes a curricular area that has been identified from high stakes assessments or school improvement plans.				
7. The authentic needs assessment involves a curriculum "mapping," which provides S.L.A.B. members with a clearer understanding of the curricular needs.				
8. The needs assessment includes a review of previous curriculum successes and challenges, and a clear determination is made as to whether service-learning will improve the strength of the school's curricular mission.				
9. Curriculum directors are met with throughout the service-learning experience to ensure the strength of the project/program in meeting curricular needs.				
10. Reflection involves deep discussion about what has been learned and achieved.				